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Arkley - On the Decision of the Comm. of the

Gaelic School Society - 1846

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LETTER

TO THE

**REVEREND ALEXANDER BEITH,
STIRLING,**

ONE OF THE SECRETARIES OF THE GARLIC SCHOOL SOCIETY,

ON THE

**RECENT DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE
OF THAT SOCIETY.**

BY

**PATRICK ARKLEY, ESQ.,
ADVOCATE.**

EDINBURGH:

THOMAS PATON, 16 HOWE STREET;

SMITH & SON, GLASGOW: A. BROWN & CO., ABERDEEN:

J. DEWAR, PERTH: W. PEDDIE, STIRLING:

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29 GREAT KING STREET, EDINBURGH,
26th Feb. 1846.

REVEREND SIR,

I PROPOSE, in the form of a letter to you, as Secretary of the remanent Committee of the Gaelic School Society, to state the cause which has lately compelled so many members of your Committee to resign their places at your Board, and to enter their solemn and strenuous protest against your late decision. I have already, along with the other dissentients, signed our reasons for dissenting from that decision ; but I humbly think that its extraordinary character calls for a fuller explanation of the whole circumstances connected with it than can properly be embodied in a document of such a nature.

I confidently appeal to yourself, and to all who were present at our late meeting, for the truth of the following statement.

The Gaelic School Society was formed in the year 1811, and among the Resolutions then adopted are the following :—

“ That the most expeditious, cheapest, and most effectual method of promoting the instruction of the inhabitants of the Highlands and Islands is the erection of Circulating Schools for the express purpose of instructing them in the Gaelic language.

“ That this Meeting do now erect itself into a Society for that purpose, to be denominated “ THE SOCIETY FOR THE SUPPORT OF GAELIC SCHOOLS,” and that the only object of the Society shall be to teach the inhabitants to read the Holy Scriptures in their native language.

“ That the Society shall confine its attention as much as possible to those parts of the Highlands and Islands which are most destitute of education.

“ That the Teachers to be employed by the Society shall neither be Preachers nor Public Exhorters, stated or occasional, of any denomination whatever.”

The Society has during the last thirty-five years continued its operations with eminent success. Its constitution has been always thoroughly catholic. It has been hitherto confined to no sect or

party, nor has any evangelical denomination been deliberately excluded from its management or employment. All who felt an interest in its object, and were willing to promote it, have been invited to co-operate, and gladly welcomed.

At the recent formation of the Free Church almost all the Teachers employed by the Society joined that body; but so well recognised was the principle of perfect liberty in this respect, that no one ever thought of interfering with them for so doing. The Society at that time came to the distinct understanding that it was to take no part in the existing controversy, but to pursue the even tenor of its way without the slightest reference to either the Established or the Free Church; and so anxious was it to carry out this catholic principle, and to impress this feeling on those in its employment, that the Secretary was instructed to send a circular to each of the Teachers, containing the following injunction:—

“ I am further desired to urge upon you great caution and circumspection at the present time in reference to ecclesiastical controversies. The Directors do not at all wish to interfere with your private feelings and convictions, nor with your attaching yourself to any Christian church in particular, their only desire being to employ, so far as they can judge, godly men and efficient Teachers; but as the Society is composed of members of various denominations, and as the Schools are open alike to the children of all, the Directors require you to apply yourselves strictly to your important duties as their Teacher, lest, by any undue interference in other matters, you may impair your own usefulness, and injure the Society in the estimation of the public.—I am, yours truly,

“ ALEX. HUTCHISON, *Assistant Secretary.*

“ *Edinburgh, February 26th, 1844.*”

Notwithstanding the then honest endeavours of the Committee to act an impartial part, and secure the confidence of all, this, as might naturally be supposed, was no easy task. A rumour got abroad that the Society was wholly under Free Church guidance, and made subservient to their party purposes. I am bound to say that, in so far as I witnessed the management of the Society, I believe this rumour to have been at the time unfounded. Some of the Teachers, in their Celtic zeal for what they thought the truth, may have occasionally said or done a foolish thing, but whenever the Committee was satisfactorily instructed of this, it

was at once checked. Knowing, however, that such a rumour did prevail, and fearing that it might have an injurious effect on the contributions, we resolved authoritatively to contradict it in our Annual Report, and anew to lay before the public the true principles and constitution of the Society, by which we solemnly pledged ourselves to abide. The following candid and eloquent and truly Christian exposition of our principles is contained in the Report for the year 1844. The Report was unanimously approved of by the Committee, and afterwards by the General Meeting:—

“ Your Committee crave your sympathy and indulgence while, impelled by considerations of duty, they would touch on a topic where the greatest forbearance of sentiment and delicacy of expression are required. They have no wish to wound the feelings, or thwart the cherished convictions of a single individual. Still, owing to the prevalence of very loose and erroneous views regarding the constitution of the Society, they are bound to advert to certain disturbing influences, with which they have recently had to contend. One word of simple and honest explanation, if received in good faith, as it is proffered in good faith, may save a world of misconception and prejudice. Without a single allusion to the circumstances which constrain us to the following statement, and which, perhaps, might awaken unpleasant feeling, we beg to assure the Christian public that your Society is, in every respect in which it can be contemplated, catholic in the highest degree. We belong to no church as a Society. We press our claims for support on the heart and conscience of every member of every evangelical denomination in the land. We have hitherto enjoyed the countenance and support of them all. We come before you now with clean hands—with full and deep conviction that we have done nothing which, in the estimation of candid and reasonable men, can forfeit our title to your confidence and aid.

* * * * *

“ Your Society is catholic, too, in the *members* that constitute it. We owe much to different bodies of Christians, and amongst our members we can discern fitting representatives of all who hold the Head. Inasmuch as the Established Church was chiefly conversant with the spiritual destitution of the Highlands, and as they were the only Protestant body who, up to a very recent date, had any considerable footing in the districts to which the beneficial effects of your Society extend, it was natural that they should form a large majority of the Society, and take the lead both in the support and management of it. It were desirable to enlist the christian benevolence of other denominations to a greater extent than hitherto. Nor do we despair of such a result, were it only more generally known that we appeal to the christian sympathies of every child of God in behalf of our object,—that we would welcome his accession to our cause, and that we can assure him he will find in the Gaelic Schools ample scope for his liberality—solemn matter of prayer to God—and a channel in which his religious activity may flow, without

the slightest fear of compromising one peculiarity of the creed to which he is conscientiously attached.

"Your Society is catholic in the *agency* it employs,—your teachers, provided they be men of God, of approved piety, and of the requisite gifts, may belong to any evangelical denomination. The truth is, that we all along have had teachers of different religious persuasions, though, from causes already mentioned, the great proportion of them formerly belonged to the Established Church. Whatever change in this respect may have come over them, can no more form a ground for instituting proceedings for their expulsion, than we could expel the Independent and the Baptist teachers, who have long been upon our list.

* * * * *

"Lastly, Your Society is catholic in the *management* under which its interests are placed. Your Committee has long embodied representatives from all evangelical churches; and in this respect there is no change in the constitution of the Society. We have no wish to interrupt or disturb the spirit of friendly agreement for a common end which has hitherto actuated us. The object is so simple, and by universal confession so worthy of countenance and support, that the promotion of it need not interfere with any man's principles or prejudices, unless he travels out of his way in search of some point of collision. On the broad basis of that charity which thinketh no evil, and would overcome evil with good, we can surely unite to teach our Highland population to read the Scriptures of truth in their native tongue. Your Society is not the pendicle of a sect. It is common ground on which all true Christians may meet, and feel that, to whatever section of Christ's church they belong, the fence that separates them in the vineyard of their common Master is neither so thick nor so high but they can stretch hands across it, grasp them in pledge of mutual friendship, and cheer each other onward in the work of the Lord. With these explanations, we trust that nothing henceforth may occur to mar the harmony, impede the operations, or circumscribe the usefulness of your Society."

Such were the principles and constitution of the Gaelic School Society, as openly and solemnly guaranteed to the public, so lately as 1844. It must also be remembered that this guarantee was given for the express purpose of contradicting the rumour I have previously mentioned, and to secure the confidence and contributions of Members of the Church of Scotland. In furtherance of these catholic principles, when it became necessary last year to nominate the usual number of new Directors, the names of two ministers of the Established Church were proposed, and the committee, without one dissentient voice—without even a murmur of remonstrance, or a moment's hesitation—agreed to request these gentlemen to act along with them. The Reverend Dr Makellar, (and of him I desire to speak with the highest respect—his mild and gentlemanly conduct at all times

in the Committee would have secured our esteem, even though we had been ignorant that he otherwise well deserved it), happened to be present, and said that, as he was well acquainted with one of the ministers proposed, he would undertake personally to apply to him. He did so, but was unsuccessful in the application. Both of these gentlemen declined, not from any objection to the Society, but solely because their time was otherwise fully occupied. Not being in the least aware that any change had since that time come over the spirit of our Free friends, and well knowing that the principles and constitution of the Society remained the same, when the subject of new Directors for this year came before the Committee on the 9th current, a list was proposed, which contained, among other names, those of Dr Candlish, Mr Moody Stuart, Mr Goold, Mr Thomson of Broughton Place Church, Mr Robertson of Greyfriars, and Mr Nisbet of St Giles',—a fair and honest selection from various denominations. I may mention that there was no previous concert or arrangement whatever among the supporters of this list. It was proposed by a gentleman who has been connected with the Society since its formation, and who has always taken an active interest in its management. He did so, without, I believe, consulting a single individual. He thought that its fairness and propriety would be a sufficient recommendation. The Reverend Mr Elder and you, Sir, strenuously objected to this list, on the sole ground of its containing the names of two ministers of the Church of Scotland; and Mr Elder proposed another list, containing the same names as the first, with this difference only, that the names of the ministers of the Established Church were omitted, and those of a Free Church minister and elder inserted in their stead. After some discussion, the Committee divided, and the first list was carried by a majority. The minute of the meeting, after stating this result, proceeds thus :—

“ Mr Beith and Mr Elder dissented, and intimated their intention to submit the second list proposed, to a general meeting of subscribers. Mr Noble concurred. In these circumstances, and as many of the Directors had left the room, the meeting agreed to call a special meeting of Directors, to be held on Tuesday the 17th current, to take the whole subject into their serious consi-

deration,—the clerk to put in the billets ‘on very special and urgent business.’”

A meeting was accordingly summoned, and held on the 17th ; and as the subject to be considered was generally known, the attendance was far more numerous than usual. Those who were in favour of the first list might, if they had been so inclined, have objected to allow the subject to be re-opened in Committee, and might have insisted upon abiding by the resolution which had been formally adopted by the previous meeting, after a full discussion and a regular vote. They had no desire, however, to take advantage of the mere point of form, and prevent the further consideration of a question which involved in it principles so essential to the well-being and very constitution of the Society. The proposer of the first list therefore at once agreed to submit it *de novo*, and to hear any objections that could reasonably be urged against it. Although he thus did not insist upon considering his list as conclusively settled, yet, as it was known to have been formally adopted at the previous meeting, the *onus* of virtually annulling it and setting it aside rested upon your friends ; and we required from you reasons, not merely for preferring another list, but for positively rejecting this one. You then proposed the list which Mr Elder had formerly brought forward, and which excluded every minister and member of the Church of Scotland.

To do you justice, Sir, I give you full credit for frankly and openly avowing your principles ; but unfortunately they are principles diametrically opposed to the constitution of the Gaelic School Society, and such as ought to have prevented you, as an honest man, from ever joining that Society. You distinctly stated that on principle you objected to admit on the Committee any minister of the Established Church. You said that you considered all of them as ecclesiastically under scandal, and that if they had been in your Church, you would have held it necessary to depose them. I confess I do not see the exact bearing of this argument, as you were not called upon to admit them into your Church, but merely to co-operate with them in carrying out the objects of the Society. If your argument be good, you cannot co-operate with any minister of any Church except your own. Every Episcopalian, and Independent, and Voluntary, and, in short, every

minister who holds views different from those of your Church, would, if he happened to be in it, necessarily expose himself to ecclesiastical censure, and would, I presume, be deposed if he persisted in holding such views. Your argument, therefore, Sir, as applied to the ministers of the Church of Scotland more than to the ministers of any other Church, is absurd. You stated that you would not in any circumstances consent to sit in the committee of a religious society along with any minister of the Established Church. You said that you had since the secession acted upon this principle, and had accordingly withdrawn from various religious societies. You then entered upon some general declamation against the Church of Scotland, and concluded by resting your objection to the first list solely upon principle. Mr Elder seconded the list proposed by you. He expressed his full concurrence in the principles you had avowed ; but added, that he also objected to the first list on the grounds of what he was pleased to term " christian expediency."

The Reverend Mr Goold then addressed the meeting ; and did you not, Sir, feel somewhat abashed as he so eloquently and indignantly repudiated your principles? He told you that he deeply deplored, both on your own account and on account of the church to which you belonged, that you had given utterance to such sentiments. He told you that he never intruded his own ecclesiastical views into a society of this nature ; but, supposing he were to act on your principles, he would be bound to tell you that, as a consistent Reformed Presbyterian, he considered the Protest of the Free Church to be thoroughly Erastian, because it referred to and was founded on Acts of Parliament and proceedings which he conscientiously believed to be unscriptural and Erastian. He told you that, if your principles were correct, you were bound, in consistency, to expel from the direction and employment of the Society every office-bearer of the Church of Scotland, and every member of that Church, and himself and others, who readily co-operated with that Church, and to return the subscriptions of all who belonged to it. He told you that your principles were wholly opposed to the constitution of the Gaelic School Society. He told you that if you had any objections to the particular ministers named in the list, he would will-

ingly withdraw them, as he was always ready to give up individuals for the promotion of a great object; but that to the principle that no minister of the Established Church should be a member of this Committee, he never would assent. He told you, Sir, several home truths, which perhaps you are not in the habit of hearing stated in the exclusive circle of your own followers, but which, nevertheless, you would be none the worse of well pondering and seriously attending to.

The Reverend Mr Johnston of the United Secession Church also repudiated your sentiments, and told you that he knew of no difference in the principles and constitution of the Church of Scotland during the last six years. You seemed to be amazed at this statement; and Mr Johnston again asserted his conscientious conviction that there had been no change in the principles and constitution of the Church of Scotland during the last six years.

The Reverend Mr Noble objected to the first list upon principle. He spoke much of his conscientious feelings, and said that he could not possibly co-operate in a religious society with ministers of the Established Church. He omitted, however, to answer the question put to him, how he, who conscientiously and on principle objected to sit in any committee with ministers of the Established Church, could possibly reconcile it to his conscience to sit, as he at present does, at the Board of the Edinburgh Bible Society, in co-operation with Dr Crawford and Mr Robertson, the latter being the very minister to whom he then objected.

Dr Makellar admitted, that last year he had applied to a minister of the Established Church to act on the Committee of the Society, but said that, since then, he had seen cause to change his views in this respect, and that now he agreed with you. He did not state what had occurred since last year to operate this great change upon his mind; and I believe I am expressing the general feeling of the meeting when I say, that we were and still are profoundly ignorant of what caused this change.

A lay member of the United Secession Church, who supported the first list, said that he did not know to what length you might go—last year you were willing to admit ministers of the Established Church, and now you objected to them—probably next

year you would object to any one who did not belong to the Free Church.

During the discussion, which lasted for about two hours, and which turned almost exclusively upon the point of principle, one of your supporters said he had not yet made up his mind upon the principle, and I think other three, or four at the very most, disavowed it, and justified their vote on the grounds of a fancied expediency. The vote was taken, and your list was carried by a majority of 17 to 9. This majority, with the exception of three, consisted exclusively of ministers and members of the Free Church. *The minority consisted of every other Dissenter present, and of three members of the Established Church.* On the result of the vote being declared, the minority immediately resigned their places in your committee, concurring in the sentiment expressed by one of them, that as honest men, they could not remain another hour in connexion with the Society. It is right to state, that one of the minority had previously given in his resignation, as he had found that he was unable to attend the meetings of Committee.

The reason why we have resigned is simply, that we believe the decision you arrived at, especially when taken in connexion with the discussion that preceded it, and the arguments by which it was urged, does practically sanction the principle, that no minister of the Established Church is to be allowed to act as a member of your Committee—a principle which we hold to be uncharitable and sectarian in itself, and totally opposed to the publicly guaranteed constitution of the Society. We freely admit that you did not pass any abstract substantive resolution to this effect; but we maintain that the only reasonable construction which your decision can bear, is that which we put upon it; and for the justice and necessity of our inference we confidently appeal to the public. So entirely did the discussion seem to us to be one of principle alone, that every speaker on our side addressed himself exclusively to that particular point. Not one of us even touched upon the ground of expediency, because we did not consider that as the question before us. It seems now, however, that

a certain portion of the remanent members of Committee desire to disavow the principle asserted by you and others—certainly a majority of them did not disavow it at the time. They have, with conscious haste, published an elaborate exculpatory statement of the grounds of their decision, seeking to justify it, not on principle, but on expediency. This statement I shall append, as it is the strongest possible evidence of the unconstitutional character of their proceedings,—in fact it has only to be read to make the public condemn them. You, however, Sir, and those who supported your views, cannot shelter yourselves under this apologetic explanation. You, at least, stand out in the bold relief of a rigid and unmitigated sectarianism.

To the expediency members of Committee I would respectfully say, that I attach very little importance to principle, as separate and distinct from practice. Whatever their own abstract principle may have been, I maintain that in their practice they have violated the constitution of the Society. The very fact, admitted by themselves, of their having excluded from the Committee certain gentlemen, not from any personal objection to them—for that was never even hinted at—but solely on the ground of their being ministers of a particular evangelical denomination, is in itself a violation of the constitution of the Society. The deliberate and designed exclusion of the ministers of any evangelical church, simply because they are so, is a glaring innovation, and a practice hitherto wholly unknown. The actual and *bona fide* catholicity of the Society is equally infringed, whether such exclusion is based on an allegation of principle, or on one of expediency. Giving the expediency members of Committee, therefore, the full benefit of their explanation, it just comes to this:—*they* have violated the constitution of the Society on the grounds of an imagined expediency—*you* have violated it upon principle. The difference, Sir, if any, is rather in your favour; for, if the constitution was to be violated, and the public pledges of catholicity broken, why, certainly principle is a more plausible and a more honest reason for doing so than mere expediency. We, however, resigned our places because we hold that the constitution of

the Society should not be violated at all, either upon principle or expediency. To us, at least, your late decision seems to falsify the catholic professions we had constantly put forth. (By the way, do the Committee, in their statement, mean to say that they do not hold your views, or do they only mean to say that they did not utter them?) The Committee must plead guilty either to have broken the constitution of the Society, or to hold the monstrous doctrine that there is no Christian minister in the Established Church. We admit that the constitution of the Society forbids the admission of any man who is not a Christian, but we assert that this is the *only* recognised ground of exclusion.

I am unwilling to descend from the position I have assumed, and to come down to argue the question on the low ground of expediency; but even there, on their own shewing, the remanent Committee are at fault. In the first place, I maintain that they are barred, *personali exceptione*, from pleading this defence. So recently as last year they sanctioned and approved of the expediency of putting ministers of the Established Church upon the Committee. As already stated, the Committee then unanimously requested two ministers of the Established Church to act along with them. If I mistake not, Dr Makellar himself proposed one of these ministers: at least, he undertook to apply to him, and actually did so. Unless, therefore, they be prepared to show that something has occurred in the Established Church, since last year, so as to render now improper and inexpedient, and ruinous to the Society, that very thing which they themselves then held to be proper and expedient, and of advantage to it—unless they aver and prove this—and they have not done so—their present defence of expediency stultifies—absolutely stultifies—their past procedure. I know, Sir, of no change that has taken place in the Church of Scotland since last year, except that she has been recovering more and more from the effects of your secession—she has been lengthening her cords, and strengthening her stakes—her members have increased—her ministers have been progressing in faithfulness and zeal—the number of her missionaries has been more than doubled—her contributions for missionary

purposes have been much enlarged—she has been forming an intimate and friendly connexion with evangelical Churches abroad, and has been co-operating more cordially with Dissenters at home. Except this, Sir, I know of no change that has come over her during that time. Is this the change which makes the Committee reject her co-operation now, when they themselves applied for it last year?

But supposing that, for the sake of argument, we waive this insuperable preliminary objection to their defence, what does their expediency exculpation, after all, amount to? Why, it is simply this:—"There are, and always have been, some ministers of the Established Church in the Highlands opposed to the working of the Gaelic School Society, and who complain to us of our teachers: if we admitted ministers of the Established Church, it might be thought that we intended to listen to these complaints, and redress the supposed grievances complained of." Now this is no argument at all, or at least it was equally applicable to you before your late secession as it is now to ministers of the Established Church. Did any Dissenter ever then think of objecting to a minister of the Established Church because he belonged to the same Church as those who complained of the Society's teachers? You say that some Moderate ministers, as you call them, object to have your teachers in their parishes. If they do so because the teachers overstep the limits of their mission, and inflame the populace by violent tirades against the Church of Scotland, then they are quite right, as such conduct is totally opposed to the regulations of the Society. But if they do so merely from "a jealousy of uncanonical and irregular zeal," I humbly think they are in error; and just on that account it is the more expedient to have in your Committee ministers of the Established Church, who, by their presence there, may testify that they disapprove of, and may tend to allay, this causeless jealousy on the part of their Highland brethren.

I have no desire to do any injustice to the expediency argument of the Committee. I will even do it more justice than they have themselves done. I will extract from it, and put in plain terms the following syllogism, which they have not

ventured distinctly to state, but which is pretty broadly insinuated :—" Moderate ministers have never been admitted to the management of this Society—there are now none but Moderate ministers in the Establishment—therefore, to admit any minister of that Establishment would be admitting a Moderate minister,—a thing which has never been done." Now, this reasoning proceeds on a totally false assumption, and is almost too ridiculous to notice. " Moderate" is doubtless a very indefinite term, but it is notoriously untrue that the Established Church is at present composed of Moderate as contradistinguished from Evangelical ministers. We wished to introduce no Moderate minister, into the Committee. The gentlemen whom we proposed are pious, zealous, and truly evangelical, such as would be an ornament to any Church. On the mere ground of expediency it was most desirable to have admitted them—it was expedient to procure their aid in conducting your affairs—it was expedient to show that the practice and the catholic professions of the Society accorded—it was expedient to secure the confidence and the support of the members of the Church of Scotland—it was expedient to remove any jealousy of your Society existing in the minds of the Highland clergy—it was expedient to satisfy the Highland proprietors, on whom the Society wholly depends for school accommodation—and above all, it was expedient to act in conformity with the constitution of the Society.

There is a statement in the defence of the Committee which requires some explanation. They say, " There was no intention to alter the constitution of the Society, or the composition of its Committee, containing, as it did, some members and elders of the Establishment. The new Committee might have had, man for man, exactly the same relative proportions of the different denominations now composing it." In the Committee nominated last year there were only three members of the Established Church. Among those who were now to come out, by rotation or otherwise, were two of these ; thus leaving for next year only one member of the Established Church. In the new list which you proposed, and which was carried, there is not a single mem-

ber of that Church. You did not propose to supply the places of the two who came out by other two members of the same Church ; you expressly excluded every member as well as every minister of that Church. The proportion of the Established Church in the Committee was certainly small enough as it was,—only three out of twenty-four. You reduced it to only *one*. The statement therefore of the Committee is not correct in point of fact when they say, “ The new Committee might have had, man for man, exactly the same relative proportions of the different denominations now composing it.” Some of your adherents are expressing their pious horror at “ the late atrocious attempt to swamp the Gaelic School Society with Moderates.” Of course you are not responsible for their foolish talking ; but it is well to observe that, so far from seeking to introduce an undue proportion of the Established Church, we only sought to keep up the same small proportion already there.

I think, Sir, you committed a serious blunder in the decision you arrived at ; and you have wholly failed to justify it. You have alienated from the Society the confidence and support both of the Established Church and of Dissenters. It will henceforth be “ the mere pendicle of a sect.” It is rumoured—with what truth I cannot tell—that some even of the Free Church members of the Society are to attempt to cast you overboard at the General Meeting (if in the present state of public indignation you will venture to hold the usual General Meeting),—and to insist upon your being dropped out of the direction as speedily as decently can be. We shall see if the Society does so. That would be the first step towards its regaining the public confidence ; but even that would be only the first. We require, besides, that it shall reverse the decision of the Committee, and introduce into the management a fair proportion of ministers and members of the Established Church, and that your Teachers shall not be exclusively selected from a particular sect. If the Society adopts this honest course, it may yet recover ; but if it homologates your principles, and approves of the decision of the Committee, and, while doing so, continues to adhere to its professions of catholicity, then, Sir, every sixpence that it raises will be

money raised on false pretences ; it will be carrying on a course of systematic deception on the public.

There is a gentleman connected with this matter who well deserves to be mentioned, *honoris causa*. I mean Mr Hutchison, your Assistant Secretary. He has been officially connected with the Society ever since its commencement,—it is he who has really conducted its whole business. He has been allowed a salary for his trouble, which has for some years back been £50 per annum,—certainly small enough remuneration for his valuable services. Mr Hutchison is a member, and, if I mistake not, an elder of the Free Church. He was the only Free Churchman at the meeting who supported our list, and it was by mere accident, as you know, that, while marking the votes, he omitted to mark his own vote with the minority. He accidentally omitted to vote at all ; but, during the preceding discussion, he strongly repudiated your principles, and told you that he knew the Teachers much better than either you or Mr Elder did, and that it was perfect nonsense to talk of their leaving your service if two ministers of the Established Church were admitted to your Committee. In consequence of your decision he also has resigned. He has forfeited his salary rather than agree to what he, after thirty-five years' experience, believes to be a violation of the constitution of the Society, and a thoroughly sectarian proceeding. You see, Sir, that I do not desire to make the Free Church generally responsible for your bigotry. Since the meeting, I have met several of them, who indignantly disclaim your views, and deplore your conduct. I entertain a sincere affection and esteem for many adherents of that Church. The Free Church, if rightly managed, might become a valuable supplement to the Church of Scotland. There is room enough and work enough in the land for them both, and I heartily wish it all success in its proper calling ; but it cannot longer be concealed that there is a party in your Church—a small one I hope—which sympathises with the sectarian and narrow-minded feelings that you so unblushingly avowed. I would earnestly recommend you, Sir, to reconsider the position you have assumed. So long as you assert that the Church of Scotland is not a branch

of Christ's catholic Church at all, you cannot, of course, in consistency, co-operate with her ministers, as such ; the moment you did so, your people would suppose that all your assertions were but empty declamation—*vox et præterea nihil*. But then this idea about the Church of Scotland is rejected by the whole of Christendom, except by the Papists, and a few *ultra* Puseyites, and those in your own Church who agree with you. To get out of your false position you must just abandon this absurd idea. If persevered in, it will lead you into innumerable difficulties. It will isolate you from every Church which acknowledges the Church of Scotland as a branch of the catholic Church. It will prevent you from joining in any general scheme of religious usefulness. It will be continually a lion in your path, haunting your imagination, opposing your advance, and I much fear, Sir, that it will have an injurious tendency on yourself, as it has been found that such sectarian notions cramp and cripple the development of the mind, and give an ugly bias to a man's general sentiments. Nor have you any need to assume this position. I assure you that it is by no means a necessary consequence of dissent. There are many Dissenters in Scotland besides you. The Free Church is the most recently formed of any dissenting body. I would humbly recommend you to learn somewhat from the more matured wisdom and experience of the others. *They* all differ from the Church of Scotland as conscientiously as you do, and on grounds, which appear to them, at least as strong ; yet they do not refuse to co-operate with her ministers in religious societies, or in other schemes of general usefulness. Why should *you* do so ? *They* believe that their grounds of difference are so distinct and clearly defined, that there is no danger of their being lost sight of by such a co-operation. Do *you* think that your grounds of difference are so small and metaphysical, that they are in continual danger of being forgotten ? *They* have given forth their several testimonies to the world, and they feel sufficient confidence in their strength and truth not to be afraid that their testimonies will be injured by those who profess them coming into an occasional contact with ministers of the Established Church. Do *you* feel that your testimony is composed of so frail and fragile materials as that it

cannot escape uninjured from such a contact ? *They* can afford to be catholic. Can *you* not ? Why should *you*, Sir, think it necessary to act so differently from every other body of Dissenters ? For your own sake I entreat you seriously to reconsider the subject.

I have the honor to be,

REVEREND SIR,

Yours very respectfully,

PATRICK ARKLEY.

*To the Reverend ALEXANDER BEITH, Stirling,
One of the Secretaries of the Gaelic School Society.*

EXTRACT MINUTE of a MEETING of DIRECTORS,
held on the 20th February 1846.

It was stated by several of the Directors, that considerable misapprehension prevails among the friends of the Society on the subject of the decision to which the Committee came on Tuesday last, in adopting a list of new Directors, to be proposed to the general meeting, in preference to another list, also proposed, and containing the names of two ministers of the Established Church ; which decision was followed by the retirement of several members from the Committee. The Committee, feeling the importance of immediately correcting any such misunderstanding, resolved to lay before the public the following brief statement on the subject in question :—

1. The two lists were presented to the meeting in the simplest possible form, no motion being made on either side embodying any general principle, or expressing any opinion as to the character or suitableness of the individuals proposed. Whatever, therefore, may have been expressed by individual members in the course of the conversation which ensued, the Committee hold that the decision ultimately adopted involves nothing on the part of the majority, but an approval of the second list proposed, in preference to the other.

2. In particular, the decision to which the Committee came cannot fairly be represented as laying down any principle, or expressing any opinion, to the effect that the members of the Free Church cannot, or ought not to co-operate with ministers of the Establishment. It is true that the minority, in the course of the discussion, attempted to fasten that construction on the decision. It is true, also, that some of the Directors then present expressed themselves as feeling so strongly on the points of difference between the Free Church and the Establishment, that they, for their part, could not conscientiously co-operate with ministers of the Establishment in carrying on a strictly religious work, like that of this Society ; and the fact that such strong views were held and stated could not be overlooked in coming to a decision—implying, as it did, that the adoption of the rejected list would probably lead to the resignation of the Secretaries and other

members, to whom the Committee, in common with the whole Society, are under many and great obligations for their exertions in its behalf. The sentiment, however, was disowned by several of those who voted in the majority; and nothing can be more unjust than the supposition that the ground above alleged was adopted and acknowledged by the Committee as that on which the decision rested; especially considering that the matter was fully argued on reasons altogether different; and that no one dreamt of asking the Committee, composed as it was, and still is, of members of various denominations, to determine a general question such as that of co-operation between ministers of the Free Church and the Establishment.

3. The Committee readily admit that there is nothing in the constitution of the Society which precluded them from adopting the rejected list; but, on the other hand, they hold, and wish their friends clearly to understand, that there is no law or regulation of the Society which makes it imperative that any particular denomination should be represented in the Committee of Management. Unquestionably the Society has, from its commencement, been supported by professing Christians of various denominations, and there has been a similar variety in the composition of its Committee. But the Directors are not aware of any law or practice of the Society which would warrant the introduction into the management of any particular class of contributors merely on a view of the catholic character of the Society, and apart from a consideration of the probable effect of such a measure on its general interests.

4. In these circumstances, there being no law of the Society, and no principle of catholicity, requiring the admission of ministers of any particular denomination into the management, it was not merely competent to the Committee, but their bounden duty, to select such Directors as were most likely to serve the cause, and to omit others, however respectable, whose presence in the management of its affairs might on any account prove injurious; and so far from their being under any obligation to choose individuals of any one sect or church, it must be manifest, that if this is done merely to shew a catholic spirit, however laudable in itself, it is turning the Institution from its original and proper purpose, and making it little more than an occasion for expressing Christian charity and love.

5. The reasons which weighed in leading to the decision of the Committee were fully stated at the time, and are such as the

following:—(1.) From the beginning, and previous to the Disruption, while the Established Church, as was natural, formed a large majority of the Society, and took the lead both in the support and in the management of it, it was notoriously only a section of it, commonly called the Evangelical party, who gave it hearty countenance,—the Moderate party, and especially the Moderate ministers in the Highlands (for there were honourable exceptions among the elders and lay members), being not only cold and lukewarm, but vexatious opponents, bent on thwarting the labours of the Teachers, and undermining their influence; and it was never considered necessary then to prove the catholicity of the Society by inviting ministers of the Moderate party to be Directors. On the contrary, such a proposal would have been deemed altogether inadmissible, on grounds of obvious expediency. (2.) Whatever may be the case in other parts of the country, it is well known that throughout the Highlands,—the scene of the Society's operations,—the Establishment, since the Disruption, is really nothing more than the old Moderate party. Its ministers generally are not friendly to the labours of the Society and its Teachers; it has, in a great measure, lost the confidence of the godly people in these parts; the mass of the population not only has left its communion, but has come to look upon it as opposed to such evangelical instruction and works of revival as those carried on under the auspices of the Society. (3.) Of the fifty-seven Teachers of the Society, fifty-five belong to the Free Church of Scotland, while only one remains in the Establishment. That these good men, with their friends among the people, look with extreme jealousy on the ministers of the Establishment, is an undoubted fact; nor is it to be wondered at, considering how constantly they have been, and still are, thwarted in their labours by these ministers, and even not unfrequently assailed in their official reputation and usefulness. The Committee's minutes bear ample testimony to the annoyances thus inflicted on the Teachers by the complaints and interference of Moderate ministers of the Establishment. Already the Teachers and their friends in the Highlands have had their confidence somewhat shaken by the attempts made, most honourably, by the Directors, to conciliate the ministers of the Establishment, even at the risk of restraining the zeal and earnestness of the Teachers; and were ministers of the Establishment now, for the first time since the Disruption, and just at this juncture, introduced into the management, the impression would not only be the same as it would have been, if, before that event, ministers of the Moderate party had been elected, but even much more serious. It would be impossible

to prevent the suspicion that farther conciliation was contemplated,—that the Teachers were to be confined within narrower limits, with a view to satisfy the Established ministers in their parishes,—and that the wishes of these ministers were to be consulted, and their representations to be regarded, so as to place that blessed work, in which the agents of this Society have been so eminently instrumental, under the trammels of Moderate caution and Moderate jealousy of uncanonical and irregular zeal. Right or wrong, these impressions and suspicions, as the Committee certainly know, would have operated to the absolute ruin of the Society. The entire body of the Teachers would, in all probability, have been disgusted; the Evangelical ministers, and the godly people all over the Highlands and Islands, would have been alienated; and the Society and its Committee would have been left to rejoice in its catholicity in the south, while the whole field of the north would have been shut against it, as having for the first time assumed the aspect of Moderatism and Sectarianism.

It is painful to be compelled to write these things; but the necessity laid upon the Committee arises wholly out of the innovating proposal of the other party. There was no intention to alter the constitution of the Society or the composition of its Committee, containing, as it did, some members and elders of the Establishment. The new Committee might have had, man for man, exactly the same relative proportions of the different denominations now composing it. But ministers of the Establishment must, it seems, be brought in of new, to manifest catholicity; and the present critical and most delicate juncture of affairs, in reference to the religion of the Highlands, must be selected as suitable. It does not appear that the ministers of the Establishment were spontaneously coming forward in great numbers to support the Society,—the invitation given last year, when two were proposed for Directors, was respectfully declined. None among them, it is believed, have been subscribers to the funds, or active in raising money,—the two respected individuals named by the minority became subscribers only within the last few weeks; and altogether, during the last year, the vexatious opposition of the ministers of the Establishment in the north has been rather increasing than diminishing. This new proposal, therefore, is, in every view of it, uncalled for. It is true, some of the minority seemed very anxious to take this opportunity of shewing that the Disruption had made no change in the Establishment, so far as their relation to it, and their intercourse with it, were concerned; and that it was incumbent upon them to treat it precisely as they would have done six years ago, before the Evangelical

party left it. With all deference, this is not the question. The real inquiry is, has the Disruption made no change in the Establishment so far as the Highlands are concerned, and the Society's labours there? The Establishment may be the same to our friends as it was before; but it is not the same to the Highlands; nor can the fact of the Society having always had among its Directors ministers of the Evangelical party in the Establishment, be any reason for its now having ministers of the Establishment when that party has gone out from it.

On the whole, the Committee protest, that in the selection of the list of Directors which they have resolved to propose to the General Meeting, they have had a single eye to the well-being, and indeed to the very being of the Society. They have not, like their opponents, sought out men because they belong to a particular denomination, which they humbly conceive to be real sectarianism, under whatever aspect of liberality it may assume; but they have simply consulted for the good of the Institution entrusted to their care. And, without affirming any general principle as to alliance or co-operation among Christians,—without entering into the question of the intercourse which members of the Free Church may or may not feel themselves at liberty to have, in religious matters, with ministers of the Establishment,—without, in a word, giving any opinion respecting any one branch of Christ's Church,—the Committee are persuaded that on general grounds of expediency, such as ought to regulate the management of every society, they can amply justify their resolution to prefer a list of Directors having no names of ministers of the Establishment (though retaining members of that communion), instead of acceding to the proposal of another list, the adoption of which, they are satisfied, in present circumstances, would have been prejudicial in the highest degree, if not ruinous to the Society, in its prosecution of the great work which God has given it to do.

The Directors being under the impression that several of their brethren have resigned under a mistaken view of the real import of the resolution, desired copies of this minute to be forwarded to them, in the hope that they may be satisfied by the explanation now given.

By order of the meeting,

WM. STOTHERT, *Chairman.*

REASONS of DISSENT from, and PROTEST against, the vote taken in the Committee of the GAELIC SCHOOL SOCIETY, on the subject of New Directors, February 17, 1846.

The undersigned members of the Committee of the Gaelic School Society beg leave to dissent from, and to protest against, the vote of the 17th current,—

I. Because the mover and seconder of the list of new^d Directors, which was carried, brought forward their motion on the avowed principle that “*they never could sit at the board of a religious society with a minister of the Established Church of Scotland,*” in which sentiment various other supporters of the motion expressed entire concurrence; and accordingly not only avowed this principle, but proposed their list of new Directors in opposition to another list which had been previously moved, and which, with the names of three Free Church ministers, and some other Dissenting ministers, contained also the names of two ministers of the Established Church; the two lists being identically the same, with this single difference, that, in the second list, the names of the two ministers of the Established Church were excluded, and a minister and elder of the Free Church were proposed instead.

II. Because the principle hitherto regulating the admission of members to the Committee of the Gaelic School Society has been, that all Christian men should be eligible to the management of the Society's interests, provided they were willing to promote the object contemplated by the Society, which is simply to teach the Gaelic population to read the Scriptures in the Gaelic tongue, and agreed to do this on the basis of a constitution which compromised no peculiar tenet in their respective creeds; and it is therefore in our conscientious belief a manifest inference, from the decision against which we protest, and according to which no minister of the Established Church can sit on the Committee, that amongst the office-bearers of that Church there are no Christian men with whom we can co-operate in the common objects of Christian philanthropy,—a position which your dissentients feel to be utterly unwarranted and untenable.

III. Because, while we have no quarrel with any name on the list of new Directors which has been carried, and while for the gentlemen named on it, in opposition to the ministers of the Established Church, mentioned on the other list proposed, we cherish sentiments of the highest regard, and while, for the sake of peace, we offered to waive the names of the ministers of the Established Church, if objections were urged against them individually, or to take any course which made it clear that we were not committed to the offensive principle on which the second list had been made up, we cannot agree to exclude ministers of the Established Church generally, without feeling ourselves bound, in consistency, to agree to the expulsion of all the members of the Established Church already on the Committee.

IV. Because the principle, now for the first time established by the vote against which we protest, is in direct violation, not only of the acknowledged constitution of the Society, but of a distinct pledge recently given to the Christian public in the Society's Report for 1844, which received the unanimous sanction, not of the Committee only, but of a public meeting of the Society, and which contains the following declarations:—

“Your Society is catholic in the *members* that constitute it. We owe much to different bodies of Christians, and amongst our members we can discern fitting representatives of all who hold the Head. Inasmuch as the Established Church was chiefly conversant with the spiritual destitution of the Highlands, and as they were the only Protestant body who, up to a very recent date, had any considerable footing in the districts to which the beneficial effects of your Society extend, it was natural that they should form a large majority of the Society, and take the lead both in the support and in the management of it. It were desirable to enlist the Christian benevolence of other denominations to a greater extent than hitherto. Nor do we despair of such a result, were it only more generally known that we appeal to the Christian sympathies of every child of God in behalf of our object, that we would welcome his accession to our cause, and that we can assure him he will find in the Gaelic Schools ample scope for his liberality, solemn matter of prayer to God, and a channel in which his religious activity may flow without the slightest fear of compromising one peculiarity of the creed to which he is conscientiously attached.”

* * * * *

“*Lastly*, Your Society is catholic in the *management* under which its interests are placed. Your Committee has long embodied representatives from all evangelical churches; and in

this respect there is no change in the constitution of the Society. We have no wish to interrupt or disturb the spirit of friendly agreement for a common end which has hitherto actuated us. The object is so simple, and by universal confession so worthy of countenance and support, that the promotion of it need not interfere with any man's principles or prejudices, unless he travels out of his way in search of some point of collision. On the broad basis of that charity which thinketh no evil, and would overcome evil with good, we can surely unite to teach our Highland population to read the Scriptures of truth in their native tongue. Your Society is not the pendicle of a sect. It is common ground on which all true Christians may meet, and feel that, to whatever section of Christ's Church they belong, the fence that separates them in the vineyard of their common Master is neither so thick nor so high but they can stretch hands across it, grasp them in pledge of mutual friendship, and cheer each other onward in the work of the Lord."—*Thirty-third Annual Report, &c.*, 1844.

V. Because the principle now established is in notorious opposition to the practice of the Society up to the latest date, when the business of choosing Directors required to be transacted; inasmuch as two ministers of the Established Church were last year proposed for this Committee—were asked to join it by a unanimous agreement—and were not received into it simply from the circumstance that they themselves declined to comply with the request preferred to them. Nor can it be alleged that the proposal to which we refer was made through any partizan attachment to the Established Church, since it originated with members of the Free Church; and in the present question, the dissentients are chiefly connected with denominations differing from the Established Church, on grounds, in their opinion, more weighty and decided than any as yet embraced in the testimony of the Free Church, to which, with three exceptions only, the majority belong.

VI. Because, since the decision against which we complain may induce Highland proprietors attached to the Established Church to refuse accommodation for Schools,—the chief difficulty with which the Society has long had to contend,—the Gospel may thus be excluded from vast districts in the Highlands, through a main channel by which it has hitherto found access to them, and thus the vote of the Committee entails upon them a burden of responsibility which we decline to incur.

VII. Because while we rejoice to know that a few members

in the majority condemned and disavowed the principle against which, in Christian love and faithfulness, we would remonstrate, and voted on certain fancied grounds of general expediency, we hold that these grounds of expediency are not supported by the facts of the case, and the information we possess;—that enlightened expediency dictated the very opposite course from that which has been adopted;—and above all,—and this we would add in our own defence, and without the least insinuation against others,—that in a question of duty, no considerations of mere expediency must be permitted to outweigh Christian principle and common integrity.

We beg respectfully to add, that we are not “satisfied with the explanation” given in the Minute of the Directors, dated 20th February, which we have seen only in the newspapers.

We abstain from characterizing that document, and simply entreat the public to compare it with the facts asserted in the above reasons of dissent. In the “Minute” they will search in vain for the slightest allusion to the fact that the motion which carried was made avowedly on the principle that no co-operation could be held with ministers of the Establishment in a religious society,—four only out of the seventeen in the majority expressly guarding themselves against being understood to homologate that principle. When one of our number requested the majority to adopt any course, by which it was simply made clear that we were not committed to the rejection of two gentlemen because they were ministers of the Established Church, offering to waive all opposition if this were done, and a respected minister of the Free Church, in the most amiable spirit, also talked of a middle course;—the only answer was the peremptory assertion of a succeeding speaker on the side of the majority, that the time for a middle course was gone by. We are thus directly at variance with the authors of the “Minute” on a simple matter of fact. They affirm that “no one dreamt of asking the Committee” “to determine a general question, such as that of co-operation between ministers of the Free Church and the Establishment.” We were asked to determine that very question, and we were asked to determine it to the exclusion of ministers of the Establishment. There are two ways in which such a question might be determined,—by a general motion affirming a principle, or by a specific list concocted according to an avowed principle. Our opponents chose the latter. It seems the only course they could have taken for the purpose. Who expects, in the management of a private committee, the regular formalities of a public court? Whatever statement they may urge now, it cannot

change the character of their former procedure. We believe these gentlemen incapable of an approach to falsehood or equivocation. We lament that an excess of zeal has blinded them alike to the facts of the case and the merits of the question at issue.

A single statement disposes of the long argument about expediency. Had a principle not been urged as the ground on which the list of the majority was framed, and the establishment of which the list was intended to determine, we could never have felt our consciences aggrieved. We would not have been asked to do what the constitution of the Society forbade us to do,—exclude men because they belonged to a particular denomination.

It is said that “some of the minority seemed very anxious to take the opportunity of showing that the Disruption had made no change in the Establishment.” We wish it to be remembered that this statement was not ultroneously advanced by the minority, but drawn from them in reply to an argument by the mover of the second list, that he could not co-operate with ministers of the Establishment, because, had they been amenable to the jurisdiction of the Free Church, he would have felt it his duty to concur in deposing them. In reply, it was stated that the Committee had nothing to do with his relation to the Established Church,—we were not sitting in judgment on different churches,—if we were to enter into that argument, the Established Church might be shown to be the same as it had been six years ago. The gentleman who gave this reply, coupled it with a strong expression of regard for his brethren of the Free Church.

The majority affirm that “they have not, like their opponents, sought out men because they belong to a particular denomination.” We beg respectfully, but most firmly, to deny the insinuation. Not one of us had entered into any concert with another on the subject of new Directors, before the list now rejected had been proposed and carried at a preceding meeting of the Committee. So little of a factious spirit did we evince, that, though we had carried our list, we consented to a full discussion of the whole question anew, and the appointment of a special meeting for this purpose. We acted without any common understanding whatever. The clerk read over the list of new members. When the names of two ministers of the Establishment were given, a member of Committee nominated them as new Directors. Hardly any of us knew that they had become members. None of us was pledged to support them if proposed. It is *not* the fact that we sought out and voted for two gentlemen simply because they were ministers of the Established Church. It *is* the fact

that we voted against a motion avowedly intended to exclude them, as such.

We are not ashamed of the position we occupy. We believe that we have performed a great Christian duty, and performed it in a spirit for which our keenest opponents cannot reproach us. Nothing but a single-hearted desire for the good of the Society has actuated us. The public will feel that there must have been something in the decision of the majority which cannot admit of strong defence, when it drove from the Committee men of various denominations,—men who, in the Committee and out of it, had exhausted every effort for a friendly adjustment,—and, when the facts of the opposing documents are dispassionately weighed, we anticipate with confidence a decision in our favour.

GEORGE JOHNSTON.	RICHARD HUIE.
WILLIAM H. GOOLD.	ED. CRUICKSHANK.
JAMES CORNWALL.	PATRICK ARKLEY.
JAMES TROUP.	W. OLIPHANT.

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